

Improving Team Collaboration

Terrie L. Glass



Improving Team Collaboration

Collaboration Defined

When two or more work together to realize shared goals.

A deep, collective determination to reach goals that will be beneficial to all involved.

Sharing knowledge, learning together and building consensus.

Collaboration is NOT...

Civility

Cooperation

Compromise

Collaboration IS...

- Sharing resources in a way that solves a problem or increases the effectiveness of the other party
- Coaching/sharing expertise to increase the competence and success of another
- Freely sharing information that, once known, could be used by the receiving party for harm if trustworthiness has been misread

Why Collaborate?

There are many things that simply cannot be accomplished or not accomplished nearly as well without collaboration. The future of our organizations depends on the dramatic increase of this skill among staff at all levels.

What Does it Take to Collaborate?

Will

- See the benefit
- Be willing to be an equal with others
- Be willing to put in the work

Skill

- Engage the other
- Identify interests and needs
- Communicate effectively
- Work together creatively

Will to Collaborate

Be Clear About the Benefits of Collaboration

Be an Equal With Others

- Genuinely value and respect the other
- Share knowledge freely
- Be receptive to the other's ideas and willing for him/her to have a better idea than you
- Genuinely care about the other's success

Invest in Doing the Work

- Build a genuine relationship
- Do the "things your mother taught you"
- Move closer - even if you don't like your potential partner
-

Skills For Collaboration

- Engage the other
- Identify interests and needs
- Communicate effectively
- Work together creatively

Improving Team Collaboration

Engage the Other

At your Table Group discuss the following:

Do you have anyone you are actively engaging or have been trying to engage? How are you going about it?

Have you ever had someone who you were finding difficult or unhelpful until you managed to turn the relationship around? What did you do? What did you learn from the experience?

Identifying Interests and Needs

Behind our goals and objectives are interests and needs. Behind the positions we take in an argument or discussion are interests and needs. If you want to be a good collaborator, you need to be able to discover the interests and needs of your potential partner.

How do you discover the other's interests and needs?

- Listen eagerly and deeply
- Ask "why" and "why not"
- Say "tell me more..." often

You also need to be clear about your own interests and needs. Articulate them often to yourself and your partners as you work together. You want to have a relationship where both of your needs/interests matter and get met as much as possible.

Communicate Effectively

- Speak their language and in their "style"
 - Commanding and forceful
 - Warm and funny
 - Easy going and kind
 - Reserved and exacting

Improving Team Collaboration

- Manage yourself

Table group exercise: what emotions or thoughts do you find yourself having the hardest time managing at work? (anger, frustration, impatience, discouragement). When you do well at managing this, what steps are you taking?

- Be candid and courageous when there needs to be a difficult conversation

What are the keys to having an effective, candid conversation with someone when you disagree or are feeling frustrated?

You must manage the 4 conversations ---

- Be aware of what you are thinking and feeling
- Calm yourself down
- Either set aside your thoughts or find a way to speak them professionally
- Do not be provocative or sarcastic
- When all else fails, buy more time. "We don't need to decide this now." OR "Let me think about this more."

Work Together Creatively

- Remember that there is more than one answer
- Be receptive and try to build on each other's suggestions
- Think beyond what everyone would think to do

Special Challenges

Non-collaborative partner –

- Maybe the person who has tried before wasn't as good as you. Don't believe everything you hear about someone.
- If your experience is that he/she is not collaborative, just keep doing the right things anyway. You may win him/her over.
- Even if the person does not collaborate back, you will likely still get more from them than you would if you didn't try to collaborate.
- Remember: you only control yourself. Try not to be too frustrated

"It has to be his/her idea"

- "This may be a crazy idea...."
- "This is probably not a good idea, but..."
- I don't know as much as you do. Do you think that...."
- Keep your ego in check. You don't need to be smarter than this person! Remember your goal!!

"Bad blood" historically

- Distance yourself from previous players. Don't mention them or act as though you admire them or were mentored by them.
- If necessary, have a direct conversation about the history. Acknowledge that the situation was not the best and apologize for your potential collaborator's experience. State directly that you would not want to do business that way in the future.

Bosses are competitors.

- Don't talk badly about them. But it is OK to indirectly acknowledge that it is "best if we work this out."
- When speaking to your boss, emphasize what you and your organization is gaining from the collaboration. Don't highlight what you are doing to help the other until your boss sees clearly the gains he/she is getting from your work.

Be the Collaborator You Need to Be!